



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Grain Inspection,
Packers and Stockyards
Administration

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GIPSA Anti-Harassment Policy Statement

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This Anti-Harassment Policy Statement reaffirms my commitment to prohibit sexual and non-sexual harassment in GIPSA. Managers, supervisors, and employees must remain cognizant of this policy and refrain from perpetuating acts of harassment. Any reported claim of harassment must be resolved before it becomes severe or pervasive.

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual; has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment, unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or otherwise adversely affects employment opportunities. Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, threatening, intimidating, or hostile acts, and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group.

Employees seeking relief from harassment based on sex, with or without sexual conduct, race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital or parental status must contact the Civil Rights Staff (202-720-0216) within 45 days of an alleged incident. All other allegations of harassment should be reported to supervisors or managers.

Complaints of harassment may be expressed by an employee, applicant, or beneficiary of a GIPSA program or activity without fear of retaliation. All acts of retaliation must be reported immediately through the appropriate forum indicated in the previous paragraph. All allegations will be investigated, and any individual(s) found to have violated prohibitions on harassment will be subject to disciplinary action.

Enforcement guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on employer liability for acts of harassment states that **"An employer is always liable for harassment by a supervisor on a prohibited basis that culminates in a tangible employment action."** Tangible employment actions include: hiring and firing; promotion and failure to promote; demotion; undesirable reassignment; a decision causing significant change in benefits; compensation decisions; and work assignment. The guidance also provides that **"in some circumstances, an employer may be subject to vicarious liability for harassment by a supervisor who does not have actual authority over the employee."**

Managers must disseminate this policy statement to all employees within their program areas. Prevention is the most effective tool to successfully eliminate harassment in the workplace.

James E. Link
Administrator